

CITY OF SUNNYVALE
PARKS DIVISION
730-7506

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

NOISE CONCERNS IN THE PARK SYSTEM

Our community is seeing many changes as we increase in population and decrease the amount of open space for recreation. More people use our parks, golf courses, pathways and open space for leisure and recreational activities than ever before. Preparation of public facilities for use by the public requires many work hours and a variety of equipment. Many times the use of this equipment cannot occur during the hours when visitors use the facility due to safety concerns, inconvenience and/or conflict of use for the public (maintenance around City Hall, Senior Center, park playgrounds, sports fields, etc.) or the workers (golf courses and public facility maintenance).

Therefore, staff begins to prepare public facilities, parks, golf courses and open space well ahead of the times when the public use these areas. In doing so, the equipment noise may occasionally disturb a neighbor. Concerns or complaints expressed by neighbors are important to us as we see the need to be good neighbors and assist in improving neighbor relations whenever possible.

Additionally, some noise concerns arise from park users who may, or may not, have secured a permit for amplified sound, inflatable bouncers or large groups of visitors. Such noise may be from the announcer at a Little League baseball game or the music at a birthday party. Picnickers often use a megaphone to organize field games such as tug-of-war or sack races. Dogs at play in a park may bark loudly affecting those who live nearby.

The Parks Division is very proactive with respect to noise complaints. During normal business hours, staff responds to noise complaints within 24 hours and is very flexible in reaching amicable solutions. Parks staff receive training in the responsible use of powered equipment and courtesy in public relations/customer service. Citizen Concerns are responded to in writing and maintained in a logbook for periodic review. Outside of normal business hours, the Department of Public Safety responds to noise concerns when called at 730-7100.

Noise Ordinances are found in Section 19.24 of the Sunnyvale Municipal Code. Generally, noise is restricted in nighttime hours; that is, noise must be limited between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Over the past several years, City Council has also examined noise-related concerns. Specifically in *Report to Council #99-080* Council directed staff to create a policy that addresses noise concerns and outlines the operation of equipment to maintain Sunnyvale parks, facilities and open space. In addition on June 15, 1999, City Council *approved Ordinance No. 2608-99* to specifically limit operation of leaf blowers on private property near residential areas to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p. m. This Ordinance does not relate to operation of leaf blowers on public property and does not alter or limit other uses of equipment on public property.

As directed by City Council, specific Parks Division policy to manage equipment operations and related noise follows.

GOAL: Preserve and enhance the quality of neighborhoods by continually striving to reduce noise levels related to the use of equipment needed to maintain and repair municipal facilities.

POLICY:

- Respond to all noise complaints and resolve problems amicably.
 - Provide staff training to ensure compliance with this policy.
 - Maintain and operate all powered equipment in a professional and efficient manner.
 - Whenever possible, begin work that requires powered equipment at 8:00 a.m. around public facilities and in parks adjacent to residential areas.
 - When work with powered equipment must begin before 8:00 a.m., schedule tasks with the least noise impact and begin work in locations farthest from residences.
 - When replacing equipment, consider efficiency and effectiveness and purchase the quietest models available.
 - Use newer, quieter equipment when working in areas adjacent to residences.
 - Use electric or battery-powered equipment whenever practical and feasible.
 - When work must be scheduled during the hours of 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., it should meet one or more of the following criteria:
 1. Required work could create a safety hazard for the City staff (greens aeration, right of way maintenance, etc.) if completed between 7am and 10pm.
 2. Required work presents a potential danger or inconvenience to the public (leaf and debris removal around public facilities) if completed between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
 3. Required work involves the use or placement of equipment in locations that during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., create a safety hazard to field crews and drivers (median and right of way maintenance).
 4. Required work involves the use of dangerous or hazardous materials such as pesticide products (weed and/or pest control in public areas) in areas that visitors typically use between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
 5. Required work is for a facility that opens early for use by the general public (City Hall, Community Center, Golf Courses, parks, etc.) and cannot be accomplished while the public is present.
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